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Oral history interview with Joan Tracy

Joan Tracy

Kellie Ray

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JOAN TRACY
INTERVIEWED BY KELLIE RAY
EWU Women's Oral History Project
EWU 984-0094 # 89
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K. RAY: This is Kellie Ray, and I will be interviewing Joan Tracy for the Cheney Women's Oral History Project. Her topic concerns the public library and the date is 2-22-83. Okay. I'm going to go over first tell you just a little bit about what we're trying to do. I'll be asking you some questions like I said about your background and your work experience and things along those lines and then I'll go on to how you were involved in Cheney Activities and ask you some general questions about issues and events that were going on during the time that you lived here. I was going to start with your background. Why don't you tell me a little bit about your education?

J. TRACY: Well, I was born and I grew up in Tacoma. I went to high school there and when I graduated from high school, I went to the University of Washington and then my junior year, I married; I finished college at the University of Washington.

K. RAY: Got your degree from the University of . . .?

J. TRACY: Yes, my first degree, and then, even before I graduated, I started teaching. I taught first grade in Seattle for two years.

K. RAY: Oh?

J. TRACY: And my husband accepted his first teaching job in Montana, so we lived in Montana for a couple of years. Moved back to Washington State for a couple of years and then moved to Oregon for several years, and while I was in Oregon, I started working first part time as an elementary school librarian. I liked the work a lot and then I went on to work full time for a couple of years, and I decided I had no library training; I had trained as a teacher, a first grade teacher. I found it very interesting and I liked it and I decided I wanted to go into that field, so at first I took a night school courses in which is twenty-five miles from where I lived in Forest Grove.

K. RAY: Is Forest Grove in Or. . .

J. TRACY: That's Forest Grove, Oregon west of Portland about 25 miles. So I talked to a woman I know who was a high school librarian and she gave me good advice. She suggested I work for an American Library Association accredited a master's degree. So I did that and I went to school during the summer, that's no longer possible but at that time it was possible. I went to the University of Washington during the summer for four years and since my husband was a teacher, he was able to work with the kids during the summer, and that was the summer that my youngest daughter was born. I went back and finished and I'm so glad I did because then in 1963. '64, excuse me, 1964 we moved to Cheney and our neighbor happened to be a woman who was a secretary to the library director at that time. Then in 1967, I heard from her that one of the librarians was going on being a leave of absence to have a baby. So I applied for that job as a temporary job for three or four months, but she never came back, so I'm still here.

K. RAY: So you moved to Cheney then in 1964?

J. TRACY: In the summer of 1964. My husband had a friend here who was teaching here. My husband was a high school teacher then by oh out 1950 or 50. yeah 1950 he

started teaching, so he had been a high school teacher for 14 years and he had his MBA, he got his masters degree at Green College in Portland.

K. RAY: So it sounds like your husband's had quite a bit of teaching around a lot of different areas.

J. TRACY: Yes, he's taught in Cheney since 1964.

K. RAY: He teaches?

J. TRACY: English.

K. RAY: English, you mean? Really? Okay, you lived here then for fifteen.

J. TRACY: Well, let's see, that's sixteen.

K. RAY: Sixteen.

J. TRACY: Well, no more than 18 years. Our daughter was a year old; our youngest daughter was a year old when we came here. So we've been here now 18 years.

K. RAY: Okay, so also you actually didn't start out as thinking you would be a librarian, you . . . that's not how you say that its librarian isn't it?

J. TRACY: Librarian, yeah.

K. RAY: I'm from Minnesota, so I have an accent.

J. TRACY: Yeah, I had noticed.

K. RAY: But then you kind of went back to school, you went to summer school and started with night classes, you went to summer school and. . .

J. TRACY: Got my master's degree at the University of Washington in summer school study for four summers.

K. RAY: The first library. . . librarian job you got was here then?

J. TRACY: Yes, the first job I got after my degree.

K. RAY: Okay, Okay, so today, now I said that outside at the front that you're the assistant librarian, is that right?

J. TRACY: The assistant librarian for technical services.

K. RAY: For technical services?

J. TRACY: Yes, that means I'm in charge of the area of the library that has to do with acquiring books, technical orders, processing and the bombshell, ready the shelves and maintain the card catalogue. All that area of the library, the other area of the library which is the computer reference, the circulation, the special collections. Public services we don't have at this library, the public services we have now and some adopted albums and some other people and the coordinator and stuff.

K. RAY: Okay. Let's. . . it said. . . in the information that information packet that we got that you were involved in the founding of the Cheney Public Library. Is that correct?

J. TRACY: Yeah, yes, well when I first came here from those other places we lived the first places I'd look for were the post office and the store and then I started looking for the library and I was very much surprised to find that there wasn't any library. You'd think in a town like this with college peoples. Well, there wasn't any public library; there was a college library, which I started to use right away. But of course a college library can never meet the needs of the general public. They really shouldn't try because the circumstances are quite different for a college library or a university library that has to serve the needs of the students and faculty for all the teaching and research that goes on and whereas a public library serves people of ages for their life. Not only for information, so I started looking around for a public library and found there wasn't one I did use the public library in Spokane, but of course you had to pay a fee because you

were out of the city. Anybody who is out of the city has to pay a fee to use the city library in those days. Well, now it's a different arrangement. The city and county have a reciprocal arrangement. So if you go in the county which is served by the county library district, you use a library so you don't have to pay. Of course the city's library is supported by taxes and if you're in the city you pay taxes and if you live outside the city you often use the library and have to pay. So then I thought there ought to be a way of getting a public library and there were a number of other people who were interested. I can't remember exactly how many we got together, but Felice Sterns as her name was then, who was interviewed who was also a faculty wife but is now no longer married. . . [indecipherable] and the other people I remember there were quite a number of people who were interested. There was a couple named Alan that was a campus minister that was the cloth of the ministry, they had no law that goes anymore, the Colleen house, they it was a cooperative ministry supported by several towns and churches and his first name was George. George and Helen were very much interested and then some other people who are still in Cheney, Bill and Jean Fletcher who's a retired professor of education. She lives by the Salnave School. Then Bonnie and Frank Nichols, who's a professor here. I'm trying to think now of some other people who have left from now on.

K. RAY: It sounds like a lot of people. . .

J. TRACY: Yeah, Alice Rogers . . . so a number of us were interested and we started going to city council meetings. We went to a lot of city council meetings and spoke in support of the idea of a library pointing out that people who wanted to use the library had to pay you know a city non resident's fees at the public library. People would ask us why we couldn't use the school library over there at the college library and pointed out that there would that would be we explained already about the college library. The school libraries of course are meant for the children and teachers and that and also they're not open for use on the weekends. We did manage, we did arrange I think the campus school library to keep it open in the summer time. So we kept going to city council meetings and they kept saying, well how can we afford this library? How, we won't be able to fill the potholes and we won't be able to shovel the streets and won't be able to do this and that and we can't afford it. We spent a lot of meetings down at the city council and well finally we didn't seem to be getting very far. People said, oh it would have to pass the vote three times to get the swimming pool? So finally, I think I was the one who finally thought of looking up the library laws. I looked up the library laws and I found that if you had a petition, I don't remember the exact number now, but a certain number of property owners signed the petition, we had to put...the city would have to put it on the ballot. They'd have no choice and then if it were voted on by the majority of the voters, then a library would have to be established. So we decided to go this route and we easily got the signatures from the property owners and then we had to go down to the city hall and get out the records of who were the property owners but we didn't have trouble getting the signatures and it went on the ballot in the fall of 19. . let's see, the fall of 1966. We wanted it on the primary ballot. We wanted it on the ballot in the primary but not so many people could vote who usually vote. Because would usually vote. You know, not so many people vote in the primaries straight feel that way we thought we would be able to concentrate our efforts on people who would vote and I can remember Marret Johnson was the city attorney and somebody in the city council said, well this is passable but will we have to have a library? Yes we will have to have a library. No

choice about it. So, I had read about how the Kennedy's got elected. They concentrated their efforts on people who they thought would be their supporters and that's what we decided to do. We had both of us in the paper, but what we did was I was one of the things we did was I was a committee. Anyway, I had delegates within the Democratic Town Convention and I got myself appointed a pole watching position. First of all we got the names of everybody in Cheney that we thought would be likely to support the library. We looked at the phone book and in the back of the directory and we got the names of everybody we thought would be likely to support and we contacted all the people that we could, and encouraged them to vote. Then on the day of the election, in September I got myself appointed a pole watcher, so I was able to get a complete list of all the registered Democrats. I kept watching everybody who came to vote and late in the day we started phoning everybody that we hadn't seen yet

K. RAY: Yeah.

J. TRACY: Urging them to vote for it and it passed by a comfortable majority. I think, so now we had the city, the city had to establish a library. But this didn't say what kind of library they had to establish, and all the way along we I had those of us who worked on the committee had had the idea that we should contract the service of a county library. We talked to the state librarian and we talked to the county librarian. Now the county library district includes all the unincorporated areas outside the city of Spokane. It does not include the incorporated towns like Millwood, Fairview, Deer Park, Airway Heights, Medical Lake, Cheney and all that those towns have to contract with the county for a library service. The people who live out in the county belong to pay taxes to the county library service, and that is based on so many units per factory people living on the property. So if the un-incorporated town contracts the service, they pay the same millings as a county resident. They pay the same tax as someone living in the city and then they also provide a place for the library. Now, this has been a bone to pick over the years because the city council, when they set up a budget they're used to dickering or you know, working out a range with the different departments as to what their budget will be. The city department will present a budget and then we'll say, "Well, you don't have quite enough money we'll make a cut here and a cut here. Well, with the county library it said they can't do that. It's a set rate. The county is in charge of getting the same billage as they do for the taxation for the rest of the town, because there was nothing to dicker on. So that has always bothered them, but that's the way it is. Another, so we had to persuade the city council it would be a good idea for them to contract with the library district.

K. RAY: To get the library going?

J. TRACY: To get the service provided, because we pointed out that the law says, though I don't think it's been enforced for a long time any town over four thousand people has to have a certified library professional library and we pointed out to him that cost the cost of buying books would be very would be very considerable and that the county library already had a very large collection that they locate through their branches and we tried to point out that the cost of hiring a librarian and cost of having staff and the cost of buying books, you know, they would be tremendously more expensive than contracting books from the county. So finally they were persuaded to sign a contract with the county library. So finally they were persuaded that it was going to be a contract with the county library and I think the first contract was for something like 5 or 6 thousand dollars a year. Then, we didn't have a place for a library yet, so they, the first

service they provided was too and that went on for a few months because it was 1967 I think January of 1967 that we opened a branch library in the place where it is now. In that building at that time belonged to Mr. Scalborne and the drugstore. I think he's since sold it to somebody else now, and that had been the storefront and while it's still, while it's—I think it's still a good location for the library, a place that you can walk to though I think as more of the businesses are moving out more toward the edge of Cheney, they might want to look for a place out there someday. That building's rented, and the building also had to be furnished.

K. RAY: Yeah.

J. TRACY: See, the county would provide the books and they would provide the staff, but they would not provide any furniture. So just about that time, this building was new. It must have been January of '68 because. . . must have been just after, must have, this building been the fall of '67, so it must have been January '68. We must have had that election in '67 I think it was. we had the election in '67 so '68 because this building was just new. We formed a "Friends of the Cheney Public Library" organization and a lot of people donated money and we raised I think over six hundred dollars in donations and we were able to get the stacks from the old Hargreaves library. They were off in storage somewhere. That was before I came to work here out there. We got some of the stacks from the old Hargreaves library, we also got the desk, that desk in front of the library from the old Hargreaves library. Then various volunteers including my husband and a lot of other people worked to clean up the place and put out the tables and various things. Woody Johnson was one of the first board members. The first board members were Woody Johnson and Ben Roberts and Don Fairfield, the druggist at the Owl Pharmacy. Now, let's see. . . Anyway, Woody and I went into Spokane and we bought some new furniture and spent some of the money. So we were able to get the place quite nicely furnished, of course we, Anyway, I believe it was in January. . . in the place where it is now. It's continued, for a while they were getting funds from the block grants to the city: The revenue sharing project that's being phased out. I imagine it is hard for them now to find money. We used to go that way. . . we made several. . . the library, the library organization which is sort of active off and on. Bill Bauder the librarian is active in it. It's hard to get people interested except when there's a crisis. They were having crises at various times when there were oh, movements at least the city council would continue to allocate money for the contract view out in the Spokane Valley.

K. RAY: Didn't they kind of, didn't they have to almost by law to do that or. . . ?

J. TRACY: Well, they have to. They, yeah they couldn't disestablish the library without a vote but they could change the form of library service and there's. . . concerned about the quality of the library service to be sure it continues to contract through the Spokane County library services because there's no other feasible way to provide that level of library service. But I think right now, we have a mayor who is sympathetic the only thing that revenue sharing should cease. . . it really would be more difficult to come up with the money. I think it's on a clear footing. I think the circulation has dropped a little in recent years. That's probably something to do with the location and also I think the town has just sort of stabilized as far as population. . . .

K. RAY: Well, it sounds like that you are right in there. You . . .

J. TRACY: Yes, I was on the board for a few years at the beginning there.

K. RAY: But you're not now?

J. TRACY: No, I haven't been lately. A lot of different people have been on the board, which is fine. There shouldn't be people continuing on the board like that but and I don't use the library much anymore, but I did all the time.

K. RAY: That's why you work here.

J. TRACY: This is why I was working so much. You know, I got started on this before you came down. It must have been in 1966. . . It must have been '67 that that vote took place because I was going to check these things and if you're interested I can look them up and tell you more about it.

K. RAY: Okay, well I might have to get that I don't know. So when you moved here then, had you really been involved in anything else before?

J. TRACY: Oh yeah.

K. RAY: Or was this kind of the first thing that you?

J. TRACY: No, I'd always been involved where we lived before. I've been in Forest Grove, in fact a little while ago, I had an invitation for the fiftieth anniversary celebration for the American Association of University women chapter and I've been invested in that and all that. I came to that program after a few more months I went back to work full time, out here I dropped everything else. I also was active in the League of Women Voters, and there was a league of women voters' chapter here for a while but it was really hard to get going. There is an active chapter in Spokane, but it was hard to get going in Cheney, there are not enough people.

K. RAY: I think I'll be asking some more questions about that other job.

J. TRACY: Well, I've always been active wherever I've lived, well, ever since I've been married that is, since we left Seattle.

K. RAY: It sounds like though that you got the library going within a couple of years here?

J. TRACY: Yeah, when we reached ours. . . started working on it. . . I think it just took a matter of getting, not a great number people. I think there was a lot of people who wanted and would like to have a library. I think it's just a matter of getting a fairly small group to really work on it. We had all the people and.

K. RAY: Yeah, got to get things going.

J. TRACY: And lots of time while people. . .

K. RAY: Yeah, so could you tell me what the most fulfilling part of your job, of your involvement in the founding of the library?

J. TRACY: Well I think it was awfully nice to see the see that vote favorable for us.

K. RAY: Yeah. From what you said it sounds like probably the most frustrating part was to get the money or to get the. . .

J. TRACY: Yeah, but that was the city council's responsibility. The money, I don't think you can tell them where to find the money, that's their responsibility to set the budget and I mean any kind of community, I mean governmental level like that. If you argue about where you're going to find the money, you don't get anywhere. What you do is go and present the case as this is something that we need. Only, I wouldn't argue that having a library is more important than having sewers or streets. Of course you couldn't. I mean, a city has certain things that it's set out in the law that they have to provide such as streets and sanitation and fire and pure protection, they have to provide that. The library is not required. But so we could make the case that the library is important and

that we need it in the town and that when the vote came of course it was their responsibility to find the ways of providing money.

K. RAY: Yeah.

J. TRACY: You could not tell them they had to cut something else to do it. They had to do it. . . I don't think they actually had to cut because. . .

K. RAY: Yeah. What so . . . your husband helped with the painting?

J. TRACY: Oh, yes he was always very supportive.

K. RAY: So he was very supportive of you.

J. TRACY: Yeah, and he actually helped us on the, we worked to get that building done on time. A lot of people had done that since then, and I'm glad to see that there's a different group now and. . . .

K. RAY: So it'll keep the support going.

J. TRACY: I think its general support in the community too.

K. RAY: What about your daughters then were pretty young so they probably didn't have much of a. . .

J. TRACY: Well, the older girls. . . we had quite a gap in age, the older girls were in Junior High school when we came here and my other daughter was. . .

K. RAY: Yeah, Maybe part of your motivation. Okay, so let's just say we talked about the library and so it was founded and we I believe getting there. I was curious whether.

J. TRACY: You know, I have a, I've been looking for that article I wrote an article about it for the Washington library. Why don't the Washington State library bulletin. I'll get that out for you.

K. RAY: Okay.

J. TRACY: Now, give me your address and where I can send it to you.

K. RAY: Okay, it's . . . East, two double O, 7 Lelend. L-E-L-E. . .

J. TRACY: Okay, I'll send that to you. Because I would like to get these dates straight and it has all the names of the people who are on the library board. . .

K. RAY: Okay.

J. TRACY: What's your zip code?

K. RAY: 99208 is my number.

J. TRACY: Yeah, okay, that's a good summary. I wrote it for the Washington Library, state library bulletin just not long after we opened the library and just a summary of what we've done.

K. RAY: Do you often write articles or was that just?

J. TRACY: Well, that was the first thing I'd written for the library journals, I'd written several since I've come to work.

K. RAY: Okay, well let's move on to a few more general questions then, like what local events or happen to stand out most in your mind since living in Cheney?

J. TRACY: I think the most exciting time we've ever had was the leak in 1977. I remember it because that was in, that was in, let's see, I don't know the exact week. But I remember it was in the middle of June just before the end of spring quarter in 1977.

K. RAY: Okay.

J. TRACY: That was the day the field house burned down.

K. RAY: Oh.

J. TRACY: That was tremendously exciting, I can tell you. You know sitting out in the back and loading up right out there where that parking lot is now, and the heat was so intense you could feel it on your face and you could see people running back and forth and of course all the fire engines came from everywhere around all those communities around.

K. RAY: Yeah.

J. TRACY: And at the same time there was a bank robbery going on down at the Farmers and Merchants just at the very same time that this building was burning down.

K. RAY: Was there any connection between them?

J. TRACY: No, not in the slightest. It's a pure coincidence. The policemen were chasing the robbers and they were shooting at each other. [not a good day for a Realtor to show a house in Cheney to an out of townner]

K. RAY: Oh my god. Here in Cheney?

J. TRACY: That's the most exciting day I think Cheney's probably had in a long time. Let's see what other events and he toured Spokane and you know all about that. The town of course was growing a lot and we had I think 2000 students at the college. I think there are 4000 people in town and half of them are students in the college. The town I think has more than doubled since. When we first moved here we rented a house right over here. Old Silver Sides they called it because it had silver siding and you got to give it a nice little. . . because somebody put that on, it's one of the oldest houses in Cheney. We found out from one of our daughters that a paper in high school, junior high school I think where we were supposed to find out about our house and she found out it was one of the oldest houses in Cheney. It's over a hundred years old.

K. RAY: Oh my gosh.

J. TRACY: We rented there for a year and then we moved to a new house down on 5th street out on the edge of town not too far from the shopping center through there, and we lived there from 1965 to 1974 we moved again to be closer to the high school. So, when we first moved here, all that area down there between where the high school is and further down, that was just all-open fields and of course all this end of town has grown a lot.

K. RAY: After the field house burned down then did they did they have move then did they have to rebuild. Is that one that is standing now?

J. TRACY: Oh that was already started. They were demolishing the old field house. It was being torn down and set on fire accidentally. I'm sure it was accidentally because the demolishing people, the people demolishing it had to clean inside it just to take it down. [both laugh] Everybody got out alive because it was this big huge old building that had been bought over. . . it had been a gymnasium at the Farragut Naval Base that was built up at Pend Oreille for training naval officers. . . naval people during the second World War. There was a big naval base up there and after the war was going well they sold off and moved it, and I think the college paid a dollar for this gymnasium and moved it down here, some little piddly amount it was just surplus you know.

K. RAY: Yeah.

J. TRACY: So this big long building and once the flames got started and everything like that it was just consumed by that and I think it burned down in a half an hour.

K. RAY: That's really interesting to think that they brought it from, how did they ever bring it over?

J. TRACY: Well, I don't know. They must have taken it apart. When we first came here there was some, there was some housing out there in the center of the plot is now in this housing there were old buildings. I think those had also been brought from by the ferries and they were used for I think faculty housing. I talked to some other people here about that and those were torn down. I think those had come from there too. Well, I think the town has certainly improved a lot. I think it's still something that Kansas and Minnesota, I think we're still very lacking in the recreation for young people, teenagers. I think it's a wonderful town for children because they can wander all over. They can go to the swimming pool and the parks. But I think for younger teenagers who don't yet have a car, and I think it's pretty boring. There's not much to do for teenagers. When we first moved here there was a little theater downtown you could go to. It didn't last very long though.

K. RAY: Oh that's too bad.

J. TRACY: Yeah it's something, well they have the R movies now but still I think it's something for the younger teenagers. There's not much for them to do and I feel that I think the shopping is not, I always wish we could have something like, well the town we lived in Oregon had one—It's further away from Portland I suppose that's why, but they had a Penny's store and you know they had better shopping but that's, it's so close to Spokane. . .

K. RAY: Yeah. I was just going to ask you. . .

J. TRACY: That it's hard to compete.

K. RAY: Yeah, because when you're that close to a bigger town, you. . .

J. TRACY: Well they put a bus services up from Spokane to Cheney. That was a very interesting improvement. When we first came here, there used to be a train stopping here. You could take the train into town in the morning. But there was only one bus that they had. I think there was one running at 6:30 and one came back. A Greyhound in the afternoon. It was impossible to. . .

K. RAY: Yeah, yeah.

J. TRACY: Use that much you know.

K. RAY: Well, they, you know, they had a train? It went from Cheney to Spokane.

J. TRACY: Yeah it was a regular passenger train that came through and made a stop in Cheney.

K. RAY: When they had the road, was that when they had the road that stopped in town?

J. TRACY: Yeah, but that's long gone, yeah. I think there are passenger trains, trains that go through on Amtrak.

K. RAY: Did electrical use those trains then?

J. TRACY: I don't think so. That was why, probably why, that was the last vestige of the train service before they all collapsed. Amtrak took over.

K. RAY: Okay, let's go on to the next question. What minorities if any had any influence in Cheney do you think?

J. TRACY: Oh I don't think there's ever been much of the minority population. The largest one is the people connected to the college students and all that.

K. RAY: I think that happened now. Now I'm going to ask you your opinion of a broader question.

J. TRACY: Okay.

K. RAY: Do you have. . . I'm not really sure, maybe you probably weren't in Cheney at that time but do you have any memories of the Depression.

J. TRACY: Oh, no I was not in Cheney. I was a child during the Depression.

K. RAY: Right, right.

J. TRACY: That was when we lived just outside of Tacoma. We, Oh, yes I can remember that pretty well when I was a child during those times.

K. RAY: What are some of those memories.

J. TRACY: Well, my father was unemployed was the deal. My mother was fortunate. She was a teacher and she had been married and a teacher before the Depression started or about the time the Depression. . . my parents were married in 1926 so my mother was teaching before that. In fact, she started teaching when she was only 18 years old. She graduated from high school at the age of 16 and those day's people were allowed to. . . encouraged in fact to skip grades.

K. RAY: Yeah.

J. TRACY: So she graduated from high school and went to college for two years, got a lifetime certificate and taught for over 40 years. But she was teaching and although any woman that got married. . . a teacher was fired from the profession. That was common practice.

K. RAY: Because they were married?

J. TRACY: Yeah, because they were married and it was thought that the job should go to the single people because there should only be one breadwinner. Because my mother was married already, she was allowed to keep her job before because my father was unemployed since he was 18 and he had various jobs but they didn't really get a permanent job until about 1941 or '42. So my mother worked and we had a full time housekeeper and she put my mother's, then her husband was a carpenter who lost his job and never worked again. So he was around there too and they looked after my brother and sister and I. I was the oldest one, my sister was two years younger and my brother was three years younger. She was very, she was like a devoted grandmother to us children especially to my brother. So he came every morning and stayed all day, cooked all the meals, did the washing, played with the children. Got something started with him one time when my mother came home and I remember one time my mother told me at one time she was earning 110 dollars a month which was a big salary in those days and on that we were living the five of us plus our housekeeper and her husband. So we always were perfectly well provided for. You know I never worried and when I stayed overnight with a girlfriend in relief I think at that time her family was surviving on 65 dollars a month and I was worried I was going to eat too much of dinner. You know a lot of people would find people were reluctant to go on... it was welfare. Of course in those days when you lost your job, there was no unemployment.

K. RAY: Right.

J. TRACY: You lived on your savings or whatever you could.

K. RAY: But it wasn't really generally accepted or to interested or used to it.

J. TRACY: Well, a lot of people hated to go on the relief or welfare. They hated the concept of it but they didn't have any choice and then later on the WTA came along and my friend's father was going to make sure and go to the school meeting and teaching and they had the recreational program and I remember too that often people, men would come

to the back door and knock on the door and ask the housekeeper if they could chop wood or mow the lawn or do something in exchange for something to eat.

K. RAY: Oh, yeah.

J. TRACY: She might, she always gave them something. They weren't begging, they were asking to do something for their food, but there must have been just millions of homeless men wandering around trying to keep going.

K. RAY: Trying to keep going.

J. TRACY: So they lived in something or. . . I think all those...let me see who this is. . . let me get that. I think you probably have to feel more about having secure jobs. I know they can't remember because I know people talk about this being a depression era and I know it's very bad but it's certainly not as desperate as people seem to think.

K. RAY: Yeah.

J. TRACY: Because people lost their life savings, they lost their homes. There's nothing to save them, they didn't have savings to fall back on or anything like that, and older people lost all their savings, the banks collapsed...even bad as it is today I know that people aren't worried about it approaching that.

K. RAY: So a lot of programs got started during the Depression or because of the Depression.

J. TRACY: Well, the CCC was one that had a lot of influence in this part of the country, it was the Conservation Core for young men. Getting out in the eastern cities to work out in the middle of . . . work on it. They did a lot of good things. They built trains and Oh that probably was by the WTA because the CCC worked mainly out of the . . . worked mainly in the national forest and the national parks and things like that. Not only that it got these young men. . . these unemployed young men out of the cities in the east and gave them a, some real training, something to do. A lot of them in fact started out here later because they liked the country. Oh yeah, there are lots of people to talk about the CCC to older than me cause, like I said I was just a child. Then I went to in Junior High School and High School, the war was on and up in Tacoma there were lots of shipyards and people suddenly had jobs. Unemployment just ended practically overnight because there was work for everybody who wanted to work.

K. RAY: The war kind of pulled us out of the Depression?

J. TRACY: Oh, yeah. I think things were improving somewhat but once the war got going it really turned it around and suddenly there were jobs for everybody. Then after. . . this is the end of the war. . . in 1946 I started. . . My father wasn't in the war because he was doing. . . too old. He had family and of course we had uncles and cousins and things.

K. RAY: Okay. You mentioned when I talked to you earlier that you had some memories of I believe about the '60s.

J. TRACY: Oh, yes. Our daughters were in high school in the late '60s and there was quite a bit of activity up at Eastern here to although it was never anything like the colleges in California or even in Washington. I think the students at Eastern were more. . .had more conservative politically; more concerned with getting through college and getting a job. I think some of people were the first in their family who'd gone to college, and you didn't have that activist core though there was some activity when Martin Luther King was killed, there was a memorial service in the quad there was like a vigil, I guess you'd call it. There were asome . . .several anti-Vietnam War marches in Cheney,

my husband took part in one, but oh yeah, it was quite active in the high school in the late '60s because there was a strict dress code and boys would get sent home. I remember the students were agitated about that. My daughters were. . .some boys got sent home because their hair came down to the collar in back. Of course, girls would be sent home if they didn't wear the skirts. Of course it's hard to believe nowadays. There was a dress code at Eastern then too.

K. RAY: At the college?

J. TRACY: Oh yes. Girls were to wear a skirt, they weren't to wear slacks unless the temperature got down to 15 degrees, I believe they were saying? Hard to believe now, students ask me now when they come to work what they should wear and I'd say you need to wear shoes because if you drop a heavy book on your foot it would hurt. But aside from that you can wear anything you want.

K. RAY: Times have definitely changed a little bit.

J. TRACY: Anyway, the students had a demonstration about that, about these boys getting sent home from school and they announced that they were going to have a demonstration and they headed down out there in the field across from the Salnave school and there were two or three police cars cruising around. . . they were nervous. I didn't know what they thought was going to happen, maybe some kind of a riot? Some of the students got up and made speeches and the administrators . . . nothing was said much more about it but I think it was the next year or so that they dropped some of the dress code at least, then the second thing the jeans. Girls started wearing them and they didn't think that was appropriate because we had a basement room and they. . . produced it down there and they may have some arguments about the administration and about how the students were treated on the school grounds. Another girl we knew, this girl Glendela, was sent home from school because she was wearing black armbands. . .So Cheney had a few little reflections on it.

K. RAY: Well, yeah. An underground newspaper and a . . .

J. TRACY: There was much more exciting things going on in other parts of the country but there was a little bit going on here.

K. RAY: Yeah, definitely touched it seems.

J. TRACY: Yeah, yeah. But it was to a much lesser extent than it was in other parts of the country. Oh, we had a few people. . . I remember one day someone came marching through the library. I don't know what exactly they were protesting, but they were chanting and marching around and I didn't especially want them coming back to this part of the library. I didn't know what they were after but they marched around and marched out.

K. RAY: So it sounds like too that during the time, during the '60s and all this was going on it kind of went from being protesting the war and sort of filtered down to other things. Just basic rights like, you know like not being able to wear what you want to wear.

J. TRACY: Well, I think there's been a tremendous change in that. . .Of course the dormitories were strictly segregated.

K. RAY: Oh, yeah.

J. TRACY: Of course, when I went to college, in the female's dormitory, men were not allowed upstairs. I remember if somebody, a plumber, were to come up and fix the toilet

there were shouts of “man on the floor!” and you know, everybody ran and closed the door and they wouldn’t want to be out there in their bathrobes. There were curfews of 11 o’clock on weeknights and 2 AM on weekends and every five minutes you’re late, the campus made you stay in 15 minutes. In other words, if I’m 5 minutes late, I’d have to come in an hour earlier some other night, and you couldn’t go out and you couldn’t leave the campus on weekends unless your parents had signed permission for you to do so. So that’s all. Then when my Jeannie went away to college, she lived in a co-educational dorm, so that was quite a change in less than 20 years.

K. RAY: Yeah.

J. TRACY: In some ways I think it’s good and in some ways I think it’s a little more difficult. You know, you could tell your date it had to be 11 o’clock. . .

K. RAY: Yeah! There’s no problems there. . .

J. TRACY: It’s the old ‘boring date’ line.

K. RAY: You were glad! Do you think that the fact that you were involved in getting the library. . . do you think that had any influence on your children?

J. TRACY: Oh, I think so. I think that they are quite independent and of course the two older girls right now are married and have young children are not working outside the home but I think they will be again someday. I don’t know, I think I had a different model. I think I had quite an unusual experience because of my mother. . .

K. RAY: Being a teacher?

J. TRACY: Yes, because she worked very, very truly and worked during those days. I think, I don’t think I remember any children that I knew whose mothers worked outside the home. My mother just did her work, it was very important to her. Not just the job, she took her teaching very seriously, she was a very fine teacher. Because she took it seriously, we all took it seriously. She bartered her time very carefully. She’d give all her time very carefully, she gave all her full effort to her teaching and we all helped out at home. We washed the dishes, we helped with the cleaning, my brother stoked the coal furnace. We all worked during the summer. When we were younger, we picked berries or picked beans out in the Puyallup valley, and so I always expected that I would follow in mother’s pattern.

K. RAY: Yeah.

J. TRACY: I hoped someday too that I would get married, I got married sooner than I ever thought I would, and that I would work after I was married. In fact, I thought that I would go back to work after my children were born like she had. She only took out like two and a half years? But I didn’t. I had two children quite close together so I didn’t get back to work for two years. Then I went back to work for four years Jeannie was born. But I think that gave me a different perception. I always expected that I would work, I always expected that I would be a teacher like my mother, that I would always and I always felt that I would be able to be responsible for myself and my children. So I think that gave me quite a different attitude. I think I had quite a different role model I didn’t feel such a wrench with the feminist movement that many women did and, suddenly felt, middle aged and I’m so independent myself that I had a career, I never felt that way.

K. RAY: Take care. . .

J. TRACY: I didn’t take care of myself. I was absolutely not affected by that, but I certainly did feel that I believe that any young woman should grow up believing that she’s responsible for herself and if she marries and has children that’s fine, but maybe for

a number of years she'll be taking care of her children mostly but that's not going to be a lifetime job. When you think about motherhood, you've got to expect to have an end. I mean, you're always their mother but as far as being responsible for your children, most women live so long that your children are in their twenties by the time you're in your early forties you finish your role as a mother essentially and then you've still got another 30 or 40 years to live.

K. RAY: That's really interesting to me because I see maybe a connection between the fact your mother being the way that she was and then you and maybe even you know your children.

J. TRACY: Well, a story that tells like they might . . . you know I'm so pleased that they can stay home and be with their children while they're young, because that's very important.

K. RAY: Yeah.

J. TRACY: Of course my youngest daughter is still in college. But I expect one day they'll all be working at something.

K. RAY: Yeah, or just being really happy in what they are doing.

J. TRACY: Yeah. I think so.

K. RAY: Okay, well do you have anything else that you want to . . . you want to add or any other thoughts or anything that happened?

J. TRACY: Well, as far as Cheney goes, I still think it's a very nice town to live in. I like that, I like the small towns. I've lived in small towns now ever since I was married except for those first two years in Seattle and I like being in a small town because I wouldn't mind living in a city like Spokane, . . . congestion and all this, and so well, and I think Cheney has changed in many ways for the better, you know, it's grown. I would hope that, I would kind of hope that it wouldn't go too much more. I like the

K. RAY: Yeah

J. TRACY: Open space around it. I don't . . . I hope it will kind of be preserved. Now specifically. . . .

K. RAY: No that was all the questions that I had. I just wanted to make sure that there's nothing else that you wanted to talk about.

J. TRACY: Yeah. No, I think that's it. Yeah, I will look up this article

K. RAY: Okay

J. TRACY: Get it copied and send it to you.

K. RAY: Okay, very good.

J. TRACY: That will get my dates down. I swore I was going to look this up yesterday but I didn't get down here.

K. RAY: Happens to the best of us.

J. TRACY: Yeah, yeah.

K. RAY: Okay, well then, thanks for all the information and once we get the results of this we'll send them too you.

J. TRACY: Yeah, sure. I look forward to listening to that recap that they say. . . she was the woman I kept in touch with all these years and Lee had told me that she had been corded. . . had been recorded for this too and so I'll have to see that.

K. RAY: Yeah. Okay, well thanks again for

J. TRACY: Thank you for everything. . . for coming, I'm glad you enjoyed it.

K. RAY: Yeah.

K. RAY: The information that Joan wanted to get straight was that on September 21st, 1966 was the day that the people of Cheney voted overwhelmingly for the establishment of public library service. On January 20th, 1968 was the grand opening day of the library and the board of directors of the Cheney Public Library were the first board were. . . Stan Pierce, Mrs. Keith Tracy who was Chairman, J. Eugene Fletcher, Ron Lehman, and Mrs. Merrit Johnson.